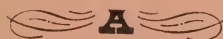


H-132.

E. R. CHANNEN  
MANTON MILLS - ONTARIO



# BRIEF MEMOIR

OF THE LATE

## GEORGE F. WARNICA,

ONE OF THE

### Pioneers of Innisfil.



*FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.*



BARRIE :

PRINTED BY N. KING, GAZETTE OFFICE, DUNLOP STREET.

1886.

~~E-2859-176,~~

*The* EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE  
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



*Queen's University at Kingston*

# WITH COMPLIMENTS

OF THE AUTHOR,

A. F. HUNTER, BARRIE, ONT.



---

## CORRECTIONS TO BE MADE.

---

PAGE 4 —Line 20. Instead of the words 'soon afterwards,'  
read 'in 1825.'

" 4.—Line 23. For 'Holland Landing' read 'Roache's  
Point.'

" 4.—Line 24. Instead of the words 'by boat' read 'over  
the ice.'

" 4.—Line 34. Omit the words 'These two settlers were  
followed by a few others .....of the Point.'

" 6.—Line 26. For '1812' read '1819.'

" 8.— " 33. For '1823' read '1825.'

" 8.— " 38. For 'fifteen' read 'seventeen.'

" 10.— " 14. For 'fall' read 'spring.'

" 12.— " 31. For '1828' read '1829.'

" 17.— " 6. For 'in' read 'into.'

**E. R. CHANNEN**  
**'ANTEN MILLS - ONTARIO**

CAN 420 1826 #3





## INTRODUCTORY.

---

A loss is often felt in the absence of records that would give a glimpse of the lives of early Canadian pioneers, every one of them locally historic figures. It was a sense of this loss that impelled the writer of this brief memoir to prepare it for publication. Its object is to commemorate the life of a pioneer who, though he was little known beyond his own county, yet played within his neighborhood a part in his day and generation. The facts herein published are for the most part reminiscences which he often related with great pleasure in his old age, and which have been collected together into a continuous narrative. These reminiscences and family records having been collected, it became our plain duty to give them a permanent form.

We have endeavored to omit anything that might be called trivial, as well as to evade the introduction of any eulogy which too often disfigures biography of every kind. It has been no part of our design to refer to every local event that occurred during the period embraced. Indeed, such a task would be next to impossible at this late hour. But, it is hoped that the fragments of local history may not be without interest to our future readers, "as the past grows ever holier the farther we leave it."

## BOYHOOD, 1808—1823.

George Frederick Warnica was born at Salina, in the State of New York, on the 20th of Sept., 1808. Salina is now a place of considerable importance, owing to the number of salt works in its vicinity; but at the time of his birth it was quite small. His parents continued to reside there during the Anglo-American war of 1812-15; but after the war, attracted by the offer of free grant lands made by the Canadian Government, they decided to leave the State of New York. Accordingly, in 1815, they removed with their family to Upper Canada, and settled in the Township of Markham.

At this remote date it is difficult to form an idea of the condition of Upper Canada, as they found it in 1815. A few facts, however, may be sufficient to throw some light upon its condition, and enable the reader to understand the hardships of the early Canadian pioneers. They were narrated by Mr. Warnica in recent years—a task which always gave him great pleasure. At the time of their arrival in 1815, the Province of Ontario, then called Upper Canada, was a dreary forest wilderness, inhabited by roving bands of Indians. A few settlers had located in some of the frontier townships, but the civilized population was very small and scattered. The first buildings of Toronto, at that time and for many years after called *Little Muddy York*, consisted for the most part of two taverns and two or three stores, nestled just east of the corner of Church and King Streets, and in the vicinity of the St. Lawrence Market. In addition to these, York contained other buildings; but its size had been reduced by the burning, in 1813, of the public buildings by the American forces, and in 1815 they had not been replaced. One of the taverns was kept by a man named Post, and the other by Monis Lawrence, the former of which was the leading one. In a year or two, a third



was added by Mr. Montgomery, who had formerly come from Nova Scotia—the father of John Montgomery of Rebellion fame. There was a small graveyard where St. James Cathedral now stands.

York derived its importance in those early days from the fact that it was the terminus of the great portage from Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe and the upper lakes. From very early times, a grand Indian trail had existed, leading to Lake Simcoe and thence to Georgian Bay. Along this trail the Indians used to shuffle in single file with their loads of furs from the far distant forests, to be exchanged at Fort Toronto for blankets, ammunition and other necessities. When we read that Governor Simcoe employed the Queen's Rangers in 1796 to construct Yonge Street towards the lake that now bears his name, we are apt to be misled. In a pioneer settlement, such as the district around York was at that time, the public roads were very poorly constructed. They remind one of Emerson's New England road that ended in a squirrel track and ran up a tree. Such was Yonge Street in those days, leading as it did through the forest wilderness to Holland Landing on Lake Simcoe. The original Street was nothing more than the old winding Indian trail, which Governor Simcoe had employed the Queen's Rangers to widen; it followed the course of the old trail from lake to lake. It was usual in making pioneer roads through Upper Canada to follow the tracks made by the Indians. Thus the Lake Shore Road, from York to the head of Burlington Bay was a trail that the aborigines had trodden from time immemorial. Governor Simcoe secured the services of an old Indian Chief who acted as pilot through the wilderness to the Holland Landing, for the first surveyor. The chief led them along the trail, and was sufficiently rewarded for his services by a good supply of pork and flour, and a trifle of money which was of less importance in those days than food. It was called Yonge Street by Governor Simcoe in honor of Sir George Yonge, a personal friend of his and Secretary of War about that time. In succeeding years it has been straightened. Settlers had to wind their way along this primitive road; and over it, in the time of the war, cannons and supplies for Michilimackinac and other forts upon the upper lakes, were transported via Holland Landing and Lake Simcoe.

Such facts as these give us a glimpse of the condition of the district to which the Warnica family removed in 1815. The Township of Markham, where they first settled in Canada, lay along the east side of the great highway whose history has just been given. It is now a well culti-

vated township, but at the time of their arrival was largely wilderness, into which the tide of immigration was flowing.

The family were in rather straitened circumstances at this time; so that, when George became ten years of age, he left home to earn his own livelihood. For three years he remained in the employment of a Pennsylvania Dutch family in Markham Township. In a year or two afterwards he was able to labor on a farm of their own in Innisfil, as we shall see.

About this time the resources of the Government of Upper Canada were actively employed in surveying and opening up new townships for settlement. In 1820, George Lount, father of the present William Lount, Q. C., of Toronto, and brother of Samuel Lount of Rebellion fame, surveyed the Township of Innisfil under instructions from the Government. In after years, when the County of Simcoe was constituted, he became its first registrar. Innisfil was accordingly thrown open for settlement in 1820.

In 1823, the Warnica family took up Lots twelve and thirteen in the twelfth concession of that township, and soon afterwards removed from Markham to their bush farm. The route by which they reached Innisfil was up Yonge Street to Holland Landing, from where the remainder of the journey was made by boat to Big Bay Point. At the latter place two or three families had already settled; and thus the Warnica family, whose land lay several miles to the west of the Point, were among the first pioneers of Innisfil Township.

The first settler of the township was Mr. F. Hewson, who landed at Big Bay Point and made a home for himself and family in the virgin forest, shortly after the township was surveyed. He was followed by Mr. David Soules, who built a little log house about three miles west of the Point, and near the shore of Kempenfeldt Bay. These two settlers were followed by a few others who all settled in the vicinity of the Point, and then came the Warnica family. The name of David Soules is still well known in the neighborhood; and although he passed away several years ago, the settlers still remember the "old squire," the name by which he was familiarly known. For many years he was the central figure of Big Bay Point, and we shall have occasion to speak of him again, more than once.

He had settled near Big Bay Point in preference to any other place, thinking that if a town should arise in his part of the country, it would be there. Unexpected changes are wrought by time; his farm is now far from the beaten path of travel and commerce. The Point is, in

late years, a favorite resort for tourists, who frequent it on account of its attractive and secluded position.

When old Mr. Warnica with his family settled farther back in the township, Soules laughed at him and said that the blackbirds would take all his crops. It may be remarked that the blackbirds were very numerous in those early days, beyond all comparison with their present numbers, and larger in size. These were the thieves, no doubt, of the Indian's corn in former times—the *Kahkahgee* of Hiawatha. But, in spite of the laughter of "Squire" Soules, the Warnicas did settle several miles farther west in the wilderness, and began to make themselves a home. They cleared a patch of ground on their farm, and built a small log house. This was close beside where the village of Painswick now stands, and a large old willow tree still marks the site of their first habitation in the forest.

---

## II.

### ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH—1823—1829.

The history of the family, for some years after their settlement in Innisfil, is similar to that of most pioneer families who undertake to earn their daily bread by *roughing it in the bush*. The five or six years succeeding their settlement were full of stirring events. The boys were growing up to manhood and were actively employed in clearing the forest on their farm. They had not been on the farm long before they harvested a good crop of wheat. But there were many difficulties with which they had to wage a constant warfare for some years to come.

Any reference to the early history of the district would be incomplete without placing in strong light the celebrated Nine Mile Portage, and the important part it played in the early years of this century. For many years it was the busiest highway of the whole district, perhaps of Upper Canada itself; and it will not be out of place to give at some length its history and other information regarding it, mostly narrated by the subject of this memoir. We will therefore leave for a time the pioneer family in their little log house in Innisfil, struggling to earn a livelihood against many difficulties.

It has already been related how Yonge Street came to be opened by Governor Simcoe. He had previously visited the shore of Georgian Bay in 1793, and had discovered that



the harbor, called by the Indians *Penetanguishene*, was the most suitable for shipping. It was thereupon decided to use this harbor in sending supplies to the Northwest Government posts. To reach Penetanguishene, the proposed route lay from York to Holland Landing on Lake Simcoe; then by water to Kempenfeldt on the north shore of Kempenfeldt Bay; and from this place a road would be made across the country. We have seen that the portion of the route from York to Holland Landing was opened in 1796. The remaining portion from Kempenfeldt to Penetanguishene was opened a few years later. This portion was winding—much like the other. In the first years of the present century this entire route was used by the Government for transporting supplies to the posts on the upper lakes. About the beginning of the war of 1812-15, however, the portion from Kempenfeldt to Penetanguishene was abandoned. A military post was then established at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River as a supply depot for Michilimackinac, which had been taken from the Americans, July 17th, 1812. Instead of the Penetanguishene route another from the head of Kempenfeldt Bay to Willow Creek was used for transporting supplies. This portage was about nine miles in length, and hence it was familiarly known as the *Nine Mile Portage*. Barrie at that time had no existence; its present site was a wilderness, there being no inhabitants within several miles. In 1812 a large government storehouse was built close to where the railway depot now stands. This was the southeastern terminus of the Portage, and for many years after this time it was the only building at the place. Long after the present town had grown up the place was familiarly known as the *Head of the Bay*, and it was generally called by this name in all early records. Its growth was by no means rapid. As late as 1852, we find the Rev. S. B. Ardagh calling it a village in his Mission Report. From here a road was made leading in a northwesterly direction to another storehouse on Willow Creek, a considerable tributary of the Nottawasaga River.

The old Portage road can still be traced across the country from Barrie to the Willow Creek, except in places where improved farms obliterate it. It passes through lot 18, con. 8, of Vespra; and on this farm are to be seen great trenches beside it which had been thrown up in the time of the war. Old spades, chains, and "other articles too numerous to mention" have been found along its route—some of them on the farm just mentioned. Farther on, it descended a very steep hill; the place is still to be seen. To de-

scend this hill with a heavy load was the greatest difficulty to be encountered along the entire portage. In the time of the war when cannons had to be teamed across, they passed ropes around the trees on the roadside, and thus let the heavy loads down with ease. For many years the trees on the hillside showed the marks of the ropes that had worn into them. This method of descending high hills was called "tacking" by the settlers.

On the sandy 'plains' at the foot of this hill, great ruts were cut into the ground by the large amount of traffic upon the road in olden times. Beyond these plains and at the top of another high bluff, within half a mile of Willow Creek, a fort was built to command the landing. Nothing can be seen there now but the outlines of a few buildings covering in all about quarter of an acre. There had been three or four acres cleared just around the fort, which is a common at the present time. As already stated, the fort was built at the top of a very high hill, overlooking a wide stretch of country; and from it danger could be seen at a great distance. The North Simcoe Railway runs along at the foot of the hill only a few rods from the site of the fort, and between it and Willow Creek. Descending the hill to the railway, and then tracing the road through swamp and beaver-meadow over the old cedar corduroy, which after the lapse of three quarters of a century is still perfectly sound, one reaches the landing itself on the Creek—the northwestern terminus of this famous portage. From this place easy access to the waters of Georgian Bay was possible by means of batteaux down the Creek and River. During the war the Canadian Government maintained the military post near the outlet of the Nottawasaga River and also for some years after. But in 1818 the garrison was removed to Penetanguishene, and always remained there. After its removal the Nine Mile Portage was still used and continued to be used for a long time. For, although a road had been constructed from the village of Kempenfeldt across the country to Penetanguishene, the existence of several large hills on the road made water transit down the Nottawasaga River to the latter place much cheaper. These hills have only been made passable in recent years by the expenditure of large sums of money. Besides having been used for military purposes the Nine Mile Portage was the only highway over which traders, settlers, and Indians passed for many years. Its vast importance in the economy of the district at that time will now be more apparent, and for this reason we have given a somewhat lengthy account of its origin.

It was said that a road had been opened from Kempenfeldt to Penetanguishene in the early years of this century. Among those who helped to make this road was David Soules, the "old squire," whose name has already been mentioned. After the Nottawasaga garrison was transferred to Penetanguishene in 1818, this road from Kempenfeldt became more useful than it had been for some years before. The road remained, however, in a very rough condition for many years, and the supplies for the garrison at Penetanguishene continued to be transported in the usual way through Lake Simcoe and over the Portage to Willow Creek. But this route, involving as it did the use of boats for a large part of the way, was not practicable for the transportation of live stock. Numbers of cattle had to be driven from the frontier townships in order to supply the soldiers stationed at Penetanguishene with beef. This was effected by collecting them at Roache's Point; they were then ferried across the entrance of Cook's Bay to De Grasse Point on the opposite shore in a scow. At the latter place was a ferry-house, occupied at the time we are speaking about by a Frenchman. From this place they were driven by way of an exceedingly winding Indian trail through Innisfil to the head of Kempenfeldt Bay, from where access to their destination was easy. This old trail through Innisfil had been in existence from time immemorial. It ran in a northwesterly direction from De Grasse Point, crossed the site now occupied by the Presbyterian graveyard on the sixth concession, and followed the valley of the Big Creek until it came within a mile or two of the Bay.

Such was the condition of the surrounding district when the Warnica family took up their abode in the bush in 1823. The quantity of traffic over the Nine Mile Portage at this time was enormous, and gave employment to the settlers with their teams all the year round. With his yoke of oxen, George teamed goods over the Portage many a time in those years. He was as yet a mere stripling of a lad—only fifteen years old when they came to Innisfil. He always spoke of his mother as having been a thrifty and tidy woman. She made a good deal of the clothing for her sons from flax, grown and manufactured at home. One shirt of this home-made linen was all that George possessed at one time in the line of shirting. Many a time he lay in bed over night while this one was being washed, and found it ready again for use when he arose in the morning. Such was roughing it in the bush in the early days!

The removal of the military and naval station from



Nottawasaga to Penetanguishene in 1818 gave the hope of a market at the latter place, and settlers began to flock to that quarter in preference to any other. For the soldiers there were paid for their services in money, and it circulated plentifully in the surrounding neighborhood; whereas, in other places farm produce was paid in store goods in those days, and it was difficult to procure cash for an article at any point nearer than York. Hence the district around Penetanguishene was settled prior to those parts between it and the frontier townships. At the time of the Warnicas' advent in Innisfil, the settlers of the Penetanguishene district, in order to reach the settled part of the province, were obliged to traverse Lake Simcoe from Kempenfeldt to Holland Landing—the northern terminus of Yonge Street. There was no road between Holland Landing and Kempenfeldt; all the intervening country, except a few isolated clearings, was one unbroken wilderness. As the settlement around Penetanguishene continued to develop, the inconvenience of transit partly by land and partly by water began to be seriously felt by the settlers there. The task of piercing the forest from the head of Kempenfeldt Bay to Holland Landing had still to be confronted. About this time a few settlers in West Gwillimbury had extended Yonge Street in a rude way northward from Holland Landing as far as Croxon's Corners, and this made the stretch of forest to be pierced still less. If this could be accomplished, overland communication between York and Georgian Bay would then be established. At the time of their arrival in Innisfil a movement was on foot among the settlers of the Penetanguishene district to have a road made through that township for the purpose of joining together the parts of the route that had already been constructed. As the Government did not seem to take steps in the matter, those settlers took the task upon themselves of opening this remaining portion of the road through the forest. They accordingly raised by subscription a sum of money sufficient to do this. The two eldest sons of the Warnica family, John and George, secured the contract for the construction of the road from the head of Kempenfeldt Bay as far as the site of the present village of Churchill, a distance of eleven miles. Where Stroud village now stands they encountered a dense swamp. They accomplished this task in the autumn of the same year in which they came to Innisfil, and received the sum of fifty-five dollars for the entire work. The contract for the construction of the remaining part of the road from Churchill to West Gwillimbury was secured by a man named Caton, who had little ac-

quaintance with the forest, and so was obliged to employ the brothers John and George to open his portion of the road also.

This forest road which they were the first to open throughout the entire length of Innisfil was very rough and winding; but it was straightened in succeeding years, and its general direction ratified by Act of Parliament. The first family to settle upon it after its construction was named McConkey, one of whom, Mr. T. D. McConkey, is at present sheriff of Simcoe County. Mr. William McConkey, an elder brother of his, also survives. In all the early records this road was called "Main Street," and at the present day it is often known as the Main Road.

In the fall of 1825, an event of considerable interest in these parts occurred. Barrie and its vicinity received the honor of a visit from Sir John Franklin, who was passing through on his way to the Arctic Sea by the northwest overland route. Of this visit George always had a distinct recollection, being then about seventeen years of age, and having been settled in the neighborhood for about two years at the time. It appears to have been Franklin's intention to reach the Red River Colony that fall, and pass the winter there. He had a band of French-Canadian *voyageurs* with him, and crossed the Nine Mile Portage, which was then at the pinnacle of its fame. David Soules of Big Bay Point with his team assisted Franklin and his men in crossing the Portage. On this occasion Franklin paid a visit to Penetanguishene. One of his colleagues and helpers about this time was John McDonald, Chief Factor of the Northwest Company, who died in February, 1828. A headstone, sent out from England by the heroic Lady Franklin, marks the grave of this man and his wife in the Church of England cemetery of the town of Newmarket. Several weeks after Franklin passed through Barrie, which consisted merely of the old government storehouse, one of the Frenchmen was sent back by him to bring word of his welfare and whereabouts to the seat of Government at York. This scout on his way back called at the house of the Warnica family. Although he could speak no English, and none of the family could speak French, they ascertained his mission very definitely, for he carried along with him a paper written by Franklin. They kept him over night, treated him hospitably; and in the morning when he departed, furnished him with some provisions for the rest of his journey.

About the time of Franklin's visit the old Sunnidale Road was constructed by the Drurys of Oro, running from



Barrie to Brentwood, and thence to Nottawasaga Bay. The present Sunnidale Road coincides with this original one, except that portion nearest Barrie. For four miles this section of it was constructed in a different place; but the course of the old one here, though not used nowadays, may still be traced. About two miles from the present site of the town, while making the road through the wilderness, the workmen came upon the semi-decayed body of an unknown man. It was impossible to recognize his features, but there was sufficient evidence to show that it was the body of a white man who had most probably perished during the winter, as the discovery was made quite early in the spring.

Time went on and nothing occurred in the history of the family beyond the usual routine of pioneer life. They were busily employed most of the time in clearing the forest on their farm. The opening of "Main Street" through Innisfil brought about an undesirable event. For a few years after this road was opened, old Mr. Warnica was obliged to convert his house into a tavern, small as it was, containing but two rooms and a loft. It was more from being compelled by circumstances that he did so, for there was no other stopping place for travellers from Holland Landing to Penetanguishene. On account of the bad state of the public roads in those days the only means of travelling was on horseback. They had many lodgers of various classes; high and low, rich and poor, were all made welcome, and received the best accommodation the place afforded.

On several occasions they were visited by Sir John Colborne, who became Governor of Upper Canada in January, 1829. Old Mr. Warnica was intimately acquainted with him, and during his term of office their correspondence was frequent. Colborne always stayed at their place on his journeys to and from the military post at Penetanguishene; and on one of these trips took the old gentleman with him for the sake of company, as both spake the same mother tongue. Sir John once promised him a good bush farm in the township of Innisfil for each of his sons; but land was of so little value then that he did not care to make a journey to the seat of government at York for the king's deed, and so the promise lapsed.

At another time they received Bishop Strachan as a guest while on his way northwards to visit some outlying places of his diocese in the district of Penetanguishene. He had an attendant with him, both riding on horseback through the wilderness. Before coming up to the house, the Bishop espied the four sons logging not far from the

road. The attendant was sent to the loggers, who stood gazing at the strangers (for passers by were few), to ask about the inhabitants of the solitary log house which was in sight at the time. It turned out to be their own, and so the good Bishop decided to call and put up for the night. The best room of the two in their dwelling, which contained a fireplace, was of course placed at his disposal. In the evening the sons were called into this room to take part in family worship, which the Bishop conducted; but he did not make a very favorable impression upon George, who thought that he might have made himself more sociable.

About this time the four sons were growing up to manhood, and their labor was more than enough to keep their bush farm in order. Some of them were thus obliged to find work away from home. This consisted for the most part in teaming over the Nine Mile Portage, where much had to be transported at all seasons of the year. As they lived only four miles from its southeastern terminus, and as settlers near it were very scarce, they frequently found employment in that way. George was often engaged with his ox team on the Portage during these years. It continued to be the route over which all supplies for Penetanguishene were taken, up to the year 1830. In this year another portage was opened by the government from Orillia to Coldwater, which was used until the Northern Railway was built as far as Collingwood. The opening of the Coldwater route was the deathblow of the Nine Mile Portage; it was little used after that time.

By these continued exertions in the forest the family began to attain a certain degree of prosperity. About the year 1828 the two eldest sons, John and George, who were young men by this time, made a trip to Salina, their native village, for the purpose of visiting their relatives living at that place. This visit to the scenes of their boyhood was very interesting to them, and the extensive salt works that had been erected in their absence, were highly instructive.

On December 10th, 1829, George married Phoebe Lyon of Thornhill, and for more than two years after their marriage he worked the farm of his mother-in-law near that place.

---

### III.

#### EARLY STRUGGLES—1829—1837.

The little log house which they had built upon their first arrival in Innisfil, soon became too small for the requirements

of the family. A time had now come when it must give place to a more commodious dwelling. Accordingly, in the fall of 1831, a larger hewed log house was built close to the site of the present residence of Dr. Armstrong, near Painswick. For the purpose of helping his father in the erection of this house, George came from Thornhill and spent two weeks at the old homestead. About the same time too, John, the eldest son, left home and bought lot 14, 12th con., which adjoined his father's farm. The attachment of the brothers, John and George, to each other was so great that the former felt himself unable to get along without the company of his brother, and so George was persuaded to leave Thornhill and return to Innisfil, where he purchased lot 15, con. 12, just beside the farm of his brother. Their removal to Innisfil took place in 1832. On the same farm they continued to live until his death in 1886.

By slow degrees the district surrounding his farm began to develop. While his family were small he employed various devices to maintain their support. The presence of the navy at Penetanguishene always made a market for farm produce there; but, as a rule, it was sold at low prices, and was not sufficiently profitable to make ends meet without doing something in addition to working his bush farm, which was still in a rough condition. Accordingly, by night he often made shoes for the neighbors; and, although his handiwork was inferior, it was well thought of in a pioneer settlement.

The times that we write about were prior to the railway age, and consequently there was considerable teaming to be done. Although the Nine Mile Portage had practically come to an end in 1830, there was still much required in a young country that was developing so fast. By this means he often found employment, and was thus enabled to support his little family and keep the wolf from the door. The district about Meaford was settled shortly after their advent in Innisfil. A great deal of teaming was in requisition by the settlers there. Not many years after his second settlement in that township he was engaged to take a load of provisions (most probably dressed hogs) with his team to that district for one of the settlers. It was winter time, and the journey was made by way of the Sunnidale Road to Nottawasaga Bay, from where the rest of it was performed on the ice. Crow's Corners was the stopping place for the night. The condition of the ice was very critical, it being near spring, and at one point the whole party narrowly escaped drowning. In a few days after, Mr. Crow, of the place just mentioned, lost a valuable



span of horses in the ice at the same place. Such were the ups and downs of pioneer life in Canada fifty years ago.

In these years too, his uncommon physical strength rendered him of great service in chopping and logging the virgin forest, not only on his own bush farm, but also throughout the whole neighborhood. He helped to clear much of the land upon which Barrie now stands. It may be especially remarked that he assisted in clearing a good deal of the McCarthy farm, just above Barrie, and other places to the west of that farm, near the residence of Mr. Thomas Cundle. It might not be out of place to add here that the pleasing avenue of second growth pines that a traveller passes through beyond the village of Painswick, is the result of his exertions in preserving the little pine saplings on both sides of Main Street from the fires at the time of clearing his own farm. These saplings have grown up to be trees of considerable dimensions, and form without doubt the most pleasant drive to be found along the entire length of the road from Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay.

At the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1837, he was called out to serve in the militia. He took his sleigh as far as Holland Landing with a load of settlers to assist in quelling it; but by the time his company reached that place the rebels had been dispersed. Notwithstanding all this, he sympathised to a reasonable extent with the principles advocated by the rebels.

With time, and the growing up of his children, prosperity increased; and not many years elapsed before he found himself in quite easy circumstances. The surrounding neighborhood, too, developed fast; and what was all wilderness on his arrival in Innisfil is now covered by highly improved farms.

---

#### IV.

### MUNICIPAL CONNECTIONS.

For several years he was in prominent connection with the local government of his own township, though he never sought any of the distinctions that were conferred upon him. It appears that in early years, before the establishment of township councils, the inhabitants of each township met together once a year (mostly in January,) for the purpose of choosing officers for the township for that year. Chief of these officers were the wardens, or town wardens,

as they were sometimes called. The township records of Innisfil begin with the year 1841. For this year there were three wardens chosen: 1—Charles Willson. 2—George F. Warnica. 3—John Henry. At the annual meeting of the inhabitants of Innisfil held in that year, it was decided to hold the next year's meeting at the tavern of David Myers on "Main Street." Town wardens continued to be elected at the annual meetings of the inhabitants each year until 1850, when they were replaced by municipal councillors in accordance with an Act of Parliament passed in that year.

The local government of the country prior to 1841 had been conducted in a very crude manner. The abuses of the system were pointed out by Lord Durham in his report to the Imperial Parliament upon the state of Canadian government. His suggestions were adopted by the framers of the Act passed at the first session of the First Parliament of United Canada in 1841, entitled "An Act to provide for the better internal government of Upper Canada by the establishment of local or municipal authorities therein." This Act divided the country into several districts, in each of which a council was to be formed. Each township within the district was obliged to send one or more representatives to the district council. At the time of this division, Innisfil belonged to the Home District, the meetings of whose council were to be held in Toronto; and to it there was allotted one representative. These regulations came into force with the beginning of the year 1842.

The annual meeting of the inhabitants of Innisfil for 1842 was held, according to appointment, on Jan. 3rd of that year, in the tavern of David Myers, at the place now known as Stroud—a village without "a local habitation and a name" at that time. At this meeting George F. Warnica received the honor of being elected Innisfil's first representative, or councillor, for the township at the meetings of the Home District council. It may be added that township representatives were then called *councillors* for the first time, and hence he became the first councillor of Innisfil. The election on that day might well be called *an old time election*, from the peculiar way in which it was conducted. David Soules of Big Bay Point, who has been mentioned several times already, was his opponent. Soules was proposed by his neighbor Moses Hayter, who afterwards became the first jailor of Barrie; and the nomination was seconded by another neighbor named Hammond. After the preliminary nomination, in order to decide the election, the two candidates were compelled to emerge from the tav-

ern in which the meeting was held, and which was by no means a large building. One candidate went north and the other south, each followed by his supporters. After the forces had been counted, the result was found to be largely in favor of the subject of this memoir.

In the discharge of his duty as councillor, he went four times during the year 1842 to attend the Home council meetings in Toronto, each of which lasted an entire week. The journey to that place was made on Sunday as far as the residence of his mother-in-law at Thornhill, from where he went on Monday morning to the city in time for the meeting. Returning, Thornhill was reached on Saturday night, and the remainder of the journey to Innisfil performed next day. When in Toronto at these meetings he, with many other councillors stayed at the famous hotel kept in those days by Mr. Post. As the appointment of Wardens to preside over the District Council meetings was retained by the Government, Col. Edward W. Thompson was appointed as the first Warden of the Home District. He presided over the meetings during that year, and gave satisfaction in this capacity.

What is now Simcoe County was united, as has been made apparent, with the Home District in that year. But this union lasted for only one year. At the end of that time a court house and jail had been built in Barrie, and "Simcoe District" was by proclamation severed from the Home District. The limits of Simcoe then embraced the whole of what is now the County of Grey. It may be added here that the terms 'Home District' and 'County of Simcoe' had been in use since the close of last century, the latter being a subdivision of the former. From this time forth the representative councillors of Innisfil went to the district council meetings at Barrie instead of Toronto. After the creation of the Simcoe District, Innisfil was represented by Alfred Willson of Belle Ewart, who continued to do so from 1843 until 1849, both years inclusive. The population of Innisfil had increased so rapidly in those years that two representatives were required from the township, and in 1849, Mr. T. R. Ferguson was associated with Mr. Willson. During those years the subject of this sketch was in various ways assisting in the local government of his township. At the residents' annual meeting in 1844, he was chosen one of the Common School Commissioners.

District councils were abolished in 1850, and the present County Councils substituted. The terms *Reeve* and *Deputy-Reeve* were then first applied to the representatives



of the municipalities, who, up to 1867, were elected from among the councillors themselves. Since 1867, Reeves and Deputy-Reeves have been elected by the direct vote of the people. In 1850 a township council was organized in Innisfil. Its first meeting was held on the 25th of January in that year. The township had been divided in five wards, each of which elected a member; and there were consequently five members at the first council board. George F. Warnica represented the Northern Ward in the first township council of 1850, as well as in 1851, and in 1852. He was urged to become Reeve in the first council, but feeling his want of education and inability to represent the township abroad, he declined. After 1852 he took no part in municipal affairs. Sometime during his tenure of office he was the first to propose payment of councillors for their services. For many years he was a Justice of the Peace, and on this account his circle of acquaintances was wide, for magistrates used to be of more service than at the present day. In politics he was always a liberal, but it is not too much to say that in township matters he avoided the introduction of party politics altogether.

---

v.

## CHURCH CONNECTIONS.

His connection with the Methodists extended over such a long period that it may not be out of place to say a word or two about it in a separate section. When a young man he became a member of the Lutheran Church. This body, however, had no appointments in Innisfil, and so he connected himself with the Methodists. In former days the Methodists of Barrie and those of Stroud, where he attended, were both in one circuit, having a church in each place, but presided over by the same minister. For several years, without money and without price, his dwelling was the boarding place of the ministers on this circuit. Brother Warnica, as they generally called him, had always plenty of accommodation for men and their horses, and his hospitality was always turned to account. Through the years during which this lasted, many ministers came and went—Burwash, who since became professor in Victoria University—Wellington Jeffers, for some years connected with the *Christian Guardian*, who was a great smoker of tobacco,

and over whom the landlord once threw a pailful of water for lying in bed too long in the morning—Clark who is now President of the Bay of Quinte Conference—and many others. For several years he was a class leader in the congregation at Stroud, of which he was a member. When he became feeble and unable to attend, he was visited by ministers of various denominations in grateful recognition of his past services to the church.

---

### CLOSE.

Throughout the summer of 1886, it became manifest that he was nearing the end of his pilgrimage. His long and eventful life came to a close on the 25th of September; and on the 28th his remains were laid in the graveyard of the Methodist Church at Stroud, where he had so often helped to lay other old pioneers in their last resting place. Throughout his life he was singularly opposed to the use of hearses at funerals, and earnestly requested that his own remains should never enter one, but should be buried in the same plain way as he had buried his own parents and many other old settlers in early days. It is almost needless to add that his request was attended to.

Should anyone into whose hands this brief sketch might fall be in possession of more authentic knowledge about the subject of this memoir and the early history of his neighborhood than is contained herein, it is earnestly desired that such information be given to any surviving member of his family. By them it would be gratefully received. Not only to descendants is such knowledge interesting, but also to the community at large. In everything, the *beginning* is always the most notable event; and by future generations of Canadians, the time when Canada was reclaimed from wilderness will always be looked back upon with interest.









